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News Sheet of the American Branch of the Anglican Society

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The Editor includes in this issue of the News Sheet two articles; one, "Notes on Chanting," he asked Canon Daniels to write: it is a stimulating article; the other article is part of an address by the Very Rev. Dr. A. C. Zabriskie, delivered at a Regional Conference of Liberal Evangelicals; it is an admirable statement.

NOTES ON CHANTING

By the Rev. Canon L. E. Daniels.

Do the interests of the Anglican Society extend to the sphere of the music we use in our services? I believe that they do. The connection of music with ceremonial is very close, and the carrying out of a perfect service in strict accord with our own standards and ideals must embrace care in regard to the music sung, and to the manner of its rendering. For instance, there must be due care that the congregation gets its opportunity for vocal worship in chants and hymns (i.e., that the choir is kept within its proper bounds), that the music selected is of a type of dignity and devoutness that harmonizes with our rite and our ceremonial, that the element of "show" is kept out, and so on.

Our communion has an incomparable heritage of splendid church music; the whole field of ancient Plainsong is ours (as is shown by Merbecke's setting to music of the First Prayer Book), we have a wealth of exquisite music of the contrapuntal period—Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, and many others—and the periods of the Restoration and the Oxford Movement have added their own contributions.

Not least among these is the Anglican Chant, which grew up naturally out of the Psalter in English, as the Plainsong Chant had grown out of the Latin text. It has been very largely used in our churches and it is still by all odds the favorite musical vehicle for singing the Canticles and Psalms. There are those who urge the use of the Plainsong chants instead, but there are few signs that the use of this music, beautiful and interesting though it is, will ever largely supplant the employment of the Anglicans. Reasons for this are easy to discover, but we do not pause to discuss the point.

In America today the Psalter is rarely chanted, and there even seems to be a preference for using anthem settings of the Canticles, instead of arranging, by the use of chants, to give the people their proper share in this item of worship. If we seek for a reason for this it is no doubt to be found in the fact that the chanting of Psalms and Canticles has fallen to such a low level in the American Church, that taking part in it, or listening to it, has become a trial and a bore. As long ago as 1856 Carl Engel wrote:

> "It is really time that we should do away with the inexcusable mode of chanting in which the words are gabbled, drawled, and misaccented, against all sound reason and good taste."

It would seem to most of us that we have not, in the intervening seventy-five years, gotten far beyond the state of things which he notes. In most of the chanting that one hears today the recitations are so hurried as to be unintelligible, the cadences are drawled in slow rhythm, and misaccents and wrong emphases abound. Anyone who has not a book in his hand finds it quite impossible to understand the words of the text. There is a general impression among our people that this awful state of things is inseparable from chanting, but that this is not true can be proved by a little experiment with speech-rhythm chanting.

If we seek to analyze the faults in the bad chanting that we ordinarily hear, we shall find that they arise from two different sorts of mistakes. The first one is the mistake of assuming that the little tune to which we sing a psalm is a seven-bar hymn tune, which must dominate the text as any tune in the hymnal dominates, in rhythm and pace, the verse to which it is sung. This results in a four-square uniformity in the rhythm of the chant, and it naturally works into the jamming together of the syllables of the recitation, if there be many of them, into the time given to a single bar. This conception was carefully inculcated in the Cathedral Psalter, which was for long our official chant book, and which dominates most of the chanting in our country today. It rests with the choir master to wipe out, to eradicate, to destroy this hymn tune conception of the chant. Adherence to the notion will ruin any chanting, no matter what pointing is used. The unlearning of it presents one of the most serious tasks in the reform of chanting.

In place of this conception must be inculcated the idea of the chant as an exceedingly flexible, lightly-rhythmed musical composition, demanding a treatment all its own. It should be conceived as a kind of musical rubber band, which can be stretched or shut together to any extent that circumstances demand. The words are to rule; the number of syllables in a bar determines the length of a bar; nothing is to be hurried or slackened out of deference to supposed musical form. A natural reading pace is to dominate the verse.

So much for what the choir master can do. But chanting, in our day and land, is beset with another difficulty—the difficulty of misplaced accents and emphases. Our great object is to make the text of the Psalms intelligible; in order to do this every syllable must receive its accustomed accent, and important words must receive their proper emphasis. The Psalters that are within our reach disregard this principle. We ought not to be required to sing magniFY, SavIOUR, regardED, caterpilLAR, grasshopPER, etc. Neither ought we to be expected to sing My soul is vexed within ME, Neither was it their own arm that helped THEM, We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told US, For then could I have borne IT. These absurdities are the work of the editors who have pointed the Psalms. Many editors have undertaken this task, and they have worked with varying results. Pointing the Psalms consists in assigning the syllables of the psalm verse to the notes of the chant. Success in the undertaking depends upon the skill with which verbal accents are made to coincide with musical accents. The Anglican Chant is a thoroughly developed and well established seven-bar composition, falling into two parts as the psalm verse falls into two parts, indicated by the colon, or star. In the estimation of nearly all present-day church musicians the chant has three fixed accents which are practically indelible—i.e., no vocal treatment of them can wipe them out. These accents occur on the two notes following the two recitations, and on the note of the final bar. In the Psalter, officially provided for us, this matter of fixed musical accents has been disregarded, and as a consequence we are constantly compelled to mis-accent and mis-emphasize as

I have indicated above. The only cure for this is a different pointing. In England, six great pointed Psalters have appeared during the last fiifteen years, bearing the names of the greatest present day church musicians. They differ among themselves in small detail, but they are absolutely unanimous in recognizing the three fixed accents of the Anglican Chant, and they invariably place important words and syllables upon these accents. They can not be used by us because of the innumerable changes in the text of the Psalms by our Prayer Book revisers. But the principles underlying them can be perfectly applied in pointing our own text to the Psalms.* These reforms in pointing and chanting are among the most important forward steps needed in our Church today. They would lead the way to a chanted Psalter as our regular custom, to a general congregational participation, and so to the brightening and vivifying of our services.

Even a cursory examination of the text of the Psalter shows that it was meant to be sung; it is sown thick with exhortation to sing it—there are no exhortations to read it. The modern Protestant Episcopalian fashion of reading the Psalter has no justification in antiquity. Until recent times Jews and Christians alike have sung the Psalms as a major part of their public worship. In England today the Psalter is generally sung, not read. Says a recent English writer:

> "The psalms should be regarded as the musical center of the service and chief pains and energy should be expended upon giving them an adequate interpretation.

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*The author of this paper has published A Service Book & Short Psalter (Oxford University Press, 30 cents) which contains the Canticles and thirty selected Psalms, pointed for speech-rhythm chanting. Clear directions for right procedure are included.

ADDRESS BY DEAN ZABRISKIE

My topic is, "What will it mean to be loyal to the Prayer Book Today?" May I make one prinicple suggestion and say that I think the major thing involved for us today in loyalty to the Prayer Book is to insist that it be the test by which matters of thought and practice in the Episcopal Church are to be judged. What it permits no one may deny; what it forbids, no one may espouse; what it insists upon, no one may disregard.

To my mind one of the most significant developments, and I say it subject to correction, in the last seventy-five years has been the increasing extent to which the Anglican Communion throughout the world has become conscious of itself as a distinct Christian entity, different on one hand from Rome and Orthodoxy, different on the other hand from the various Protestant churches. And the most distinctive thing about the Anglican Communion as a whole, to my mind, is the Prayer Book, used with unessential variations through every single branch thereof.

The things to which we Anglicans most stoutly adhere in faith are not our private possessions. Our sacramental doctrine for example, is not unique. But it seems to me the way in which this and other factors are combined, taught and made operative by the Prayer Book, is the most distinctive feature about the Anglican Communion.

Furthermore, the Prayer Book is the chief bond which holds the Anglican Communion together throughout the world. The Episcopacy has helped a lot since the Lambeth Conferences got go-

ing. The Anglo-Saxon background had a lot of effect until we began to have autonomous Anglican branches, in Japan, China and Brazil. But I think the thing that has bound it together in every part of the world has been the constant use of the Prayer Book and what the Prayer Book inculcates (almost without the people realizing it) namely, the ethical and doctrinal temper, the sacramental system, the Biblical stress, and the various other things that go to make it up.

If that is truth, if I am right about Anglicanism, the distinctive thing about it is the Book of Common Prayer. It follows, then, that we have got to insist that Anglicanism be interpreted through the Prayer Book. If someone wants to know what the Anglican Communion has stood for historically, or today in what general direction it is heading, let him look at the Prayer Book. I mean the whole Prayer Book.

The other two points I can mention briefly and they depend on this. If we are going to make the Prayer Book the test of things in our Church, one essential is obedience to it. I am not a Prayer Book fundamentalist, because I think there are lots of changes needed; nor a legalist, because I think there are times when we had better serve the spirit and purpose by violating the rule, though I don't think that is often the case; but what I would plead against is unnecessary violations of that Book. We have absolutely no right to make any unnecessary one on any score.

The other essential is that we expound and explain the Prayer Book a whole lot more. A great deal in it is very little intelligible to people who have not studied it with great care. To go through a form, however excellent that form may be, if you don't know what it is all about is not a particularly edifying thing.

It seems to me that we need enormously a great deal more effort to make the Book understood. I think we lose a great pedagogical opportunity in not preaching more from the Prayer Book. Lots of people know the Prayer Book, its words at least, vastly better than they do the Bible, and it forms a great jumping-off point for teaching. Where would you find better texts for this time than "Whose service is perfect freedom?" or "Oh, God, the Protector of all who trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy!" Things in the Prayer Book often ring in their minds, and are much more familiar than the things we get out of the Bible.

May I conclude with one further thought which was not at all in what I had intended originally to say. It looks as though Western civilization in Europe is disappearing or will disappear quite rapidly, and certainly the Anglican Church in England will be under terrific disability. Its work in other parts of the world may well be stopped. Certainly our responsibility as devoted members of that Communion, and greatly prizing the Prayer Book which holds it together, is to do our utmost to support our brothers at this time. Perhaps we shall have to take the major responsibility for the continuation of Anglicanism throughout the world, and we shall need the disciplining and the undergirding of life by a tremendous social loyalty, and our responsibilities thrust on us by the predicament of England, makes this necessary, also.

I think we need obviously to make the most desperate efforts we can to convert people first to Christ; and secondly, to His whole Church Universal; but thirdly it is our task so to teach, so to live and so to contend that the Anglican branch to which we belong (and which I believe, because of its resources and genius, may have an opportunity in the days ahead which nobody else has), shall provide that discipline and that social undergirding which it can do, and that at all times it be interpreted and understood through the Book of Common Prayer.